

RIHN News

Research Institute for Humanity and Nature



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Photo: Hein Mallee

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The Commons International Conference at Kitafuji

From the 3rd to 7th of June 2013, the 14th Global Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) was held in Kitafuji, on the northern slopes of Mt. Fuji, Japan's iconic volcano that was just recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The conference organization was a collaboration of the IASC with the Onshirin commoners' federation and the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature. Onshirin is a federation of 11 villages holding access rights to about 8,000 hectares of land on the slopes of Mt. Fuji. The villagers have been harvesting grass, firewood, lumber, and other natural resources in this area in accordance with rules agreed upon in the early 17th century. The Kitafuji Commons have also been the location of one of Japan's most valiant struggles to maintain legal rights and a functioning commons in the face of hostile pressures and massive social, economic, and political change. The Conference was the first IASC meeting to be held on a commons and the first to be sponsored by commoners.

Around 400 participants from Japan and around the world gathered in Kitafuji to discuss research and practice of the commons. Japan has a long and rich history in the use, governance, restoration, and defense of commons. Furthermore, as the presentations of many Japanese scholars at the conference showed, new commons keep on being created and invented as people find ways to address new challenges in governing and managing public spaces and natural resources in an urbanized, modern setting. Reflecting this context, a conference included a Policy Forum on the role of the commons in recovery and reconstruction efforts from the tsunami and nuclear disaster of 3.11.



International Symposium: Shanghai



Urbanization and ageing are progressing rapidly in the cities of East Asia. The economic development, industrialization and pursuit of urban lifestyles not only have a profound environmental impact on the urban areas, but also on the surrounding regions. At the same time, rural-urban relations and local social relations are affected by the concentration of population in urban areas. Together with falling birth rates and societal ageing, these developments make the introduction or reconsideration of all kinds of welfare systems more urgent. "Environment" and "welfare" are usually discussed in separate arenas. In order to begin to integrate these two discourses, the *RIHN-Initiative for Chinese Environmental Issues* on July 16 organized an international symposium: *Welfare and environmental problems in Urbanizing East Asia – The Shanghai Case*. The symposium brought together scholars from China and Japan to explore these two intertwining issues in the dynamic context of one of China's megacities.



Recent Events

14th Global Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons,

June 3-7, 2013 (Mt. Fuji, JAPAN)

<http://iasc2013.org/en/index.html>

International Symposium: Welfare and environmental problems in Urbanizing East Asia – The Shanghai Case. RIHN-Initiative for Chinese Environmental Issues, July 16

RIHN Public Forum "Our Global Environmental Research for Humanity"
29 June.

Fifth International Forum for Sustainable Asia and the Pacific,
Yokohama, 22-23 July, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) and United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS)

"Future Earth in Asia Strategic Plan Drafting Workshop", Hong Kong Polytechnic University July 31- August 2
RIHN Open House, August 2

Future Earth Developments

The past several months have seen a flurry of Future Earth activities. At the global level, after the Transition Team outlined the broad framework for Future Earth in its Final Report, a Scientific Committee with eminent scientists from a wide range of disciplines from around the world was established, and Professor Frans Berkhout of King's College, London, was appointed as the Interim Director of Future Earth. In July, an open competitive process was launched for the selection of a permanent secretariat, including a headquarters and regional nodes, for Future Earth. For this and more, see the new Future Earth Blog at www.futureearth.info.

In Japan, progress towards national structures for Future Earth paralleled these international developments.

- The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has established a working group for Future Earth and one RIHN staff member (Takagi Akira) has been seconded to the Ministry to support the Future Earth process.
- On June 18, the Science Council of Japan organized an open forum on Future Earth that was attended by over 400 people. It was the first time that the SCJ organized such a large event.
- A preliminary structure for Future Earth in Japan was initiated that largely mirrors the global Future Earth structure, with a governing council, and scientific and engagement committees, supported by a secretariat. The Science Committee has now been established at SCJ. It is expected that RIHN will play an active role in this structure in the future.
- Dr. Yasunari Tetsuzo, Director General of RIHN, was appointed as member of the global Future Earth Scientific Committee.
- A small RIHN delegation visited Beijing in early July to discuss Future Earth developments in Asia with Chinese researchers.

Upcoming Events

Workshop "Our Global Environmental Research for Humanity", RIHN, August 23
International Workshop on "Future Earth in China" September 26-27, Beijing:
RIHN International Symposium, October 23-25, RIHN

International Research Development Workshop: "Transdisciplinarity in Action"
November 14-15, RIHN

International Symposium "Future Earth in Asia", mid-January, RIHN

Next steps in East Asia:

July 31- August 2, Hong Kong: *Future Earth in Asia Strategic Plan Drafting Workshop*, hosted by Hong Kong Polytechnic University, organized by the Monsoon Asia Integrated Regional Study (MAIRS) office.

September 26-27, Beijing: International Workshop on "Future Earth in China."

January 2014, Kyoto, *International Symposium on Future Earth in Asia*, RIHN.

Recent Publications

Project: A Study of Human Subsistence Ecosystems in Arab Societies
Project Leader : Nawata Hiroshi

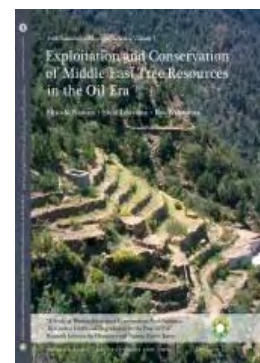
New Book Series ; Arab Subsistence Monograph Series

Vol. 1 "Exploitation and Conservation of Middle East Tree Resources in the Oil Era" (published by Showado)

Vol.2 "Dryland Mangroves: Frontier Research and Conservation" (published by Showado)

Japanese researchers and development NGOs have been particularly active in the research and conservation of dryland mangroves in the Gulf and Red Sea areas. This book series compile academic results and practical know-how of such activities, in which local administrators and people have also been involved. Descriptions and conservation techniques are given in both Arabic and English with an optimum number of photos and figures in order to serve the practical needs of those in charge of conservation and reforestation.

More details, please access the below project site:
http://www.chikyu.ac.jp/rihn_e/project/R-05.html



Inter-University Research Institute Corporation
National Institutes for the Humanities
**Research Institute for
Humanity and Nature**

RIHN invites applications for the following position:
Visiting Research Fellow for a research period of 3 to 12 months, during FY 2014 (From April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015).

Applications should be submitted by September 17, 2013.

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Kyoto, Japan promotes integrated research in the field of global environmental studies and solicits, develops hosts, and funds fixed-term research projects on pressing areas of interaction between humanity and nature. RIHN thus fosters coordinated, problem-centered, context-specific, and multi-dimensional science with multidisciplinary projects that aim to offer solutions to the problems under study.

The application process starts on July 16. For further information, see our website after this date.